888 In time of war, old people die in great numbers. During moments of panic, they are hidden in the wood, in the palm-tree swamps, while all the able-bodied population run away. They are killed by the enemy, who spares no one (it is the law of war), or they die in their hiding-places of misery and hunger!

As may be seen, the eve of life is very sad for the poor Thonga. There are however children who, to the end, show much devotion to their parents. The most to be pitied are those who fall to the charge of remote nephews or cousins. They can only repeat in a broken voice the sad refrain : " Ba hi shanisa! " — " They treat us very badly! "

G. DEATH

I. *The last days.*

763 513 834 761 Manyibane, the headman of a big village near Rikatla, is dangerously ill. The men of his kraal, his friends, have come to inquire about the illness (kamba shinyonga) and have learned that it is serious. They issue this order to all the inhabitants : " Tlulan psilawen! " — " Keep each of you in his sleeping place, (viz. the men to the right of the hut, the women to the left) and have no more relations. It is taboo! The man would die! " Should visitors come, they are not allowed to enter the village. They must have kept " pure " for two days at least. Two sticks are planted on either side of the door of the hut, and a third is put over them so as to close the entrance. " It is the way black people have of making their proclamation, " says Mboza. " Everybody will know that a dying man is there and nobody will come in. " Should another man of the village have had relations with the same woman as the patient, he is doubly prohibited from seeing him, because the patient would break out into perspiration and die immediately. This is the great law of *matlulana*, as we shall see.

754 Of course the *ñanga* (doctor) has been called already. He

754 has tried his best. The bone-thrower also! He has perhaps discovered that the disease was due to a wizard. He has found him out by his art. The suspected one is called and solemnly ordered to heal the patient. He is shut up in the hut with him, and he must recall his deadly spells and restore the man to health. But this has not succeeded, any more than the doctor's drugs!

The dying man calls together all his relations, and utters his last wishes before them : " Somebody has not come ; go and fetch him " he says. When they are all present, he says to them : " All right, my brethren, my children. I wanted to see you before dying. I wanted you, especially so and so, who has been so good to me. The others hated me ; you always showed me love. Henceforth I entrust to you the care of my people. " He will probably designate his successor, who is to be the great one (nkulukumba), and recommend the others to obey him.

763 Then he reminds them of his debts, those he owes and those which are owing to him. " So and so has lobola our daughter and has not paid all the oxen... " He reveals to them also the place where he has buried some treasure. " Go to such a place, in such a hut, and you will find it. " He does not say a word about his wives and about their future, as such questions will be settled according to the laws relating to widows, which are well known.

When the breathing becomes shorter, those who watch over him begin to *bend his limbs* (ku khondla psiro (Ro.) ; ku putja (Dj.).) This is a very old custom, and is deemed so important that the operation begins before death, lest the rigidity of the body should prevent its being accomplished. When the bending of the limbs had been too long delayed, it has sometimes been necessary to break them. To avoid this disagreeable possibility, one may see those attending to the dying man take his hands gently and bring them close up to his chin, and fold his legs against his body. When asked why they do so, they will say : " It is the law. This is the way of caring for the dead (bekisa). " Or : " It is in order to have smaller graves to dig... " But I do not think this utilitarian reason to be the true one. Amongst the Ba-Ronga, where graves are dug in the soft sand, there would not be the least difficulty in making a larger hole.

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

763 Some ethnographers have adopted the "embryonic explanation" to account for this custom, which is found all through primitive humanity, from the Mousterian age down to the first inhabitants of Egypt, and amongst a great many uncivilised tribes all over the earth (1). They say: "Primitive man placed the corpse in the attitude of the child before birth because he believed that death is but a new birth, the beginning of a new life..." I asked Viguet if he thought this to be the true original [843] explanation. He told me he did not know ; he would not deny it. But there is one fact which prevents its acceptance ; the Thongas have never done any dissection, and are ignorant of the position of the foetus in the womb. So probably are all primitive peoples. This kind of knowledge came much later in the evolution of mankind. The intention of this rite is more pfobably to place a dying man in the sitting position which a Thonga generally adopts when in his hut, as the grave is *but a hut in the earth* and he is meant to continue his life in it exactly as before. All the other burial rites confirm this explanation, as we shall see.

Manyibane is dead... In somé districts they see that he does not die with *closed hands*. It is taboo, because then the children of the dead will quarrel (Viguet). They close his eyes and take away all his clothes. In the Mpfumo clan, they *wash the body*. Afterwards they cover him with an old rug. No one cries. Lamentations are absolutely prohibited before the burial is over ; it is taboo. It would " break the back " of the men who have to perform the funeral rites.

764 Should there be *strangers* in the village when the death takes
761 place, they will run away quickly to avoid defilement ; otherwise
783 they would have to take part in all the purifying ceremonies of the following days.

372 Without delay, the *fire* which was burning in the funeral hut is removed and carried out into the square. It must be carefully kept alight. This is a taboo. Should there be rain, it must be protected. All the inhabitants must use this fire during the next five days. It will be put out by the doctor, with sand or water, on the day of the dispersion of the mourners. He will then

(1) See my paper in *Anthropos* Sept. 1910 : " Two burials at twenty thousand years distance."

643 Gigiseka. The last named was very courageous, and the cunning Maphunga succeeded in poisoning him treacherously, through the agency of a dissolute woman.

E. DEATH.

643 When a chief has grown very old, he no longer goes out of
[763] the royal hut. His counsellors take his place in the management
766 of affairs and he dies surrounded by mystery. It must be so, as his death must remain unknown during a whole year. "We reap and we bow down (korama)" viz. "we till the ground and reap again before the event is made public (palusha)" says Mankhelu.

So the chief is buried during the night; no lamentations are heard; his wives and his grave-diggers undergo the purification ceremonies and take the vapour baths in secret. It may be that the wives who dwell in remote places will not hear a word of their husband's death. The fire of the royal hut will not be kindled in the usual and ritual way, but it will be kept burning the whole year. The decease is formally announced to some few individuals, to the White Government officials, to the heir (who views the corpse), and to the counsellors, but the rest of the country is supposed to be in ignorance of the occurrence. Of course the secret will not be kept absolutely. The truth will leak out... But no one will dare to speak openly on the subject (1).

643 A special hut is set apart into which the counsellors enter under
646 pretext of discussing matters of state with the chief, who is said to be very ill and unable to show himself. As a matter of fact, he has been buried for some time.

(1) I was staying at Nondwane when Mapunga, the chief who preceded Mahazule, died, and I heard on several occasions, in June and July 1891, the warriors practising on their antelope horns the airs to be played when the mourning should be made public. The death must have occurred during 1890, but nothing was said about it. After the news had been published, Manganyele, a young heathen of the district of Libombo, remarked to me one day: "When last season (about Xmas 1890) we saw the miphimbi (trees bearing fruit similar to an apricot) so heavily laden with fruit, (there had been an exceptionally heavy crop), we felt sure the chief must have died and that he had sent us this plentiful supply..." A typical remark, aptly illustrating the semi-ignorance in which the tribe is kept of the death of the chief.

774 But although Natives locate the psychic faculties in the different
763 organs, they certainly believe in an independent psychic principle, in a *soul*. On this point, however, their ideas are most confused. They call it *moya*, spirit, and in the Ronga clans, *hika*, breath (the plural mahika, in the expression "ku ba ni mahika," means to be out of breath). This is the vital principle of man, and when a person is dying, his relatives sit near him "waiting for the departure of breath" (langusela ku suka ka hika). "The spirit has gone," — "moya wu sukile," they say, when death has come. They have no theory as regards the way the breath goes out of the body, nor do they stop the nostrils or the mouth to prevent its escape (1).

774 A third name for soul is *ntjhuti* (mu-mi), or *shitjhuti* (Ro.), *ndjuti* (Dj.) *shadow*. It seems to apply more especially to the departed soul rather than to the psychic principle of the living. I have been assured that one cannot dream of the shintjuti of any one still alive, but only if he is dead. The shadow, as such, is not subject to many taboos or superstitious fears. They do not fear to tread on the shadow of a chief, for instance. It may even be questioned if they identify the material shadow with the shitjhuti, the spiritual part of man which separates from his body at death (2). At any rate many think that it is the shitjhuti which becomes shikwembu, the ancestor god.

In former times Thongas feared to look at their own reflection in a pool. They seem to have passed that stage now. The reason was perhaps that they thought their spiritual principle to be

775 (1) A Native of Botshabelo, near Middleburg, Transvaal, asserted in my hearing
825 that in this part of the Sutho nation it was believed that the human soul escaped from the body at death in the form of a Copris beetle. The grave is not filled up with earth until a Copris has been seen in the neighbourhood; and if a hawk appears at the same time the satisfaction is still greater; the beetle has transformed itself into a hawk and the soul has in truth found its way out. Strange to say, when these Ba-Sutho give a patient medicine and see that it has had the desired effect, they say: "It has agreed with the Copris;" whilst if the patient dies they say: "The Copris has refused the medicine."

774 (2) In the following story a direct relation is established between the real shadow and the vital principle. A Ronga magician, Shidzabalana, used to show his supernatural power in the following way: he slept on the ground and ordered a mortar to be placed on his chest and three women to pound mealies in it. This seemed to make no impression on him (a fact which can easily be explained if he was in a state of catalepsy). But it suddenly occurred to one of these women that he had perhaps passed into his shadow, so she hit the shadow with her pestle. The magician at once rose, crying out; he had really left his body and entered into his shadow!